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Sent: Tuesday, October 11, 2005 1:34 PM
To: Melissa Miller-Henson
Subject: Central Coast Project public comment

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To: The Central Coast Project of the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative

Hello,

I would like to submit a public comment in support of designating protected marine areas along this coast, particularly the Monterey Bay Canyon. I would also like to make a general, brief comment with regard to size considerations and to mention a couple of physical characteristics of protected areas that can contribute to their long term viability.

My name is Diana Mossman. I moved to Santa Cruz in 1993 and, except for a brief stint elsewhere, have been a resident here ever since. Though I am representing just myself, I think my sentiments with regard to valuing the ocean are "in sync" with those of the majority of this community.

THE CANYON

I listened to the Central Coast Regional Stakeholder Group meeting Oct 5th on the internet and was surprised that during the brief public comment period nobody suggested that the Monterey Bay Canyon be given special protection. Perhaps I am stating the obvious, but lest it remain unsaid either through timidity or a presumption that the obvious need not be stated: I think the Monterey Bay Canyon should be given a status that will protect it in good condition in perpetuity. The closer it can be kept to pristine condition the better.

This canyon is a matter of our natural heritage. It is the natural underwater sister to the Grand Canyon and should have no less recognition and protection.

It is harder to look at, being underwater, but stores no less value. This exceptionally deep marine environment so close to shore where it is accessible to the public and to a concentration of marine research interests, resources and capabilities, makes it rare, and to my knowledge, unique on the planet. To boot, it is also associated with a wetland, the Elkhorn Slough. This canyon system is really special and it would be a pity not only for ourselves but also for future generations (not to mention the sea life) if we did not see this and protect it now while the opportunity is here to do so.

As our deep water capabilities develop, this canyon will become more and more visible to the public eye and the emotional support for it will continue to increase. The presence of Monterey Bay Aquarium, MBARI and associated activities gives me confidence in this.

In the mean time, let us remember the vision that protected the Grand Canyon and Yosemite. Look how valuable those are to us now, how important they are to our national pride, to the nature within them and to the wellbeing of the public. Imagine the outcry now if anything threatened those places. Let's now apply that same vision to the protection of the underwater sister to the Grand Canyon, to this irreplaceable, unique treasure, to this Monterey Bay Canyon. Present and all future generations will be glad we did.

Keeping our natural heritage in good condition enhances our ability to benefit from it, be it food for the belly or food for the soul. Having access to this healthy canyon gives us the opportunity to develop a better understanding of these oceans on which our lives and livelihoods depend.

SIZE

With regard to size, it is important that protected areas be of sufficient size (and shape by the way) to be ecologically functional over the long term.

All protected areas suffer from edge effects and "island" effects, both of which tend to reduce species diversity and both of which may not become apparent for some years. Therefore, it is better to err on the side of larger rather than end up being too small.

BUFFER ZONES AND THE VALUE OF SOME ISOLATION Putting buffer zones (areas where specific uses are limited and others are allowed) next to or surrounding core sensitive areas can help to protect those areas by reducing pressures at the boundaries be they ecological or cultural.

It allows for transition rather than a stark contrast.

In the effort to make sure that things are functionally networked, let's not forget that there are reasons to also include some functional isolation. In the event of catastrophic events such as a large toxic spill or a devastating disease, sometimes the only thing that allows recovery is the presence of isolated populations.

Thank you for considering my comments.